

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2001

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State Parks Says Protection of Birds at Oceano Dunes is Number 1 Priority

To ensure future access by its 1.2 million annual visitors, the protection of endangered and threatened birds will be the number one priority at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area over the Memorial Day weekend, said California State Parks Deputy Director David L. Widell.

The summer season, including the Memorial Day weekend, coincides with the nesting seasons for the threatened western snowy plover and the endangered California least tern. These small birds nest on the bare sands within the recreation area. Although their nests are protected within fenced areas, they can still be disturbed by inappropriate visitor activities.

"State Parks is committed to increased ranger and ecologist staffing levels for the weekend to both monitor these species and to ensure visitor compliance with the protection measures that are in place for the plover and terns," said Widell. "The absolute most important thing we can be doing to preserve motorized public access to this facility is to step up our commitment to protect these very important species, which is why we will be taking nothing for granted over Memorial Day weekend."

Widell said ranger staffing will be increased by 75 percent, with 18 rangers on duty through the weekend. The number of field biologists has been increased as well, which will enable extended hours of nest site monitoring. Rangers will be rigorously enforcing vehicle speed limits on the beach, violations of litter and dog leash laws and seeing that visitor activities do not disturb these sensitive species.

All park staff will be available to answer questions and will provide information about these species to the public and actions that visitors can take to avoid disturbing or harming the birds.

This will mark the first major holiday of the 2001 tourist season. Traditionally, the Memorial Day weekend marks the start of the busy summer season. All 1,000 campsites at Oceano Dunes SVRA have been reserved through the long weekend. Day use attendance is expected to be busy, as visitors escape the first of the hot summer weather to the cool ocean breezes that are common along the central coast.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is one of California's most popular State Parks and represents the last 5 ½ miles of beach along California's 1,100 miles of coastline where motorized recreation is still allowed.

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